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EXPEDITING RETURN TO WORK FULL DUTY WITH ONSITE MEDICAL MANAGEMENT

Emory Healthcare with Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia employs 39,075 employees. Contract onsite physical therapy and ergonomic services were added in 2001. Employees with work related musculoskeletal injuries only required five onsite physical therapy visits versus the national average of fourteen visits. The cost savings of physical therapy and employee labor costs were \$887,574 in 2006. In 2008, Emory's Occupational Injury Management Department was developed and physical therapists specializing in ergonomics were hired full time. The Emory employee received physical therapy, body mechanics instruction and an ergonomic evaluation as needed. Physical therapy statistics of discharged patients were recorded for three years to evaluate the discharge work status, physical therapy visits, the departments with injuries, and types of injuries. The goal was to provide good evidence based justification for onsite medical management with physical therapy and ergonomic services. Over 300 Emory employees were discharged annually from onsite physical therapy. The statistics revealed 90% to 93% of the employees returned to work full duty. With close medical management, only 35% of the employees required outside physician referral. The Nursing, Facilities Management, and Food and Nutrition Departments had the highest injuries. Injury prevention programs were designed based on the department ergonomic evaluations. A Safe Patient Handling Program was initiated in 2006. In 2014, there was a 12.5% cumulative reduction in lifting injuries. The average cost per WC case reduced by \$2100 in ten years. Emory's comprehensive approach expedites the successful return to full duty work and reduces the cost of work related injuries.

Biography

Kathy Norris is the Emory Occupational Injury Management Physical Therapy Manager. She provides onsite physical therapy for Emory Healthcare and Emory University work related injuries, and ergonomic analysis for work related and non-work related injuries. She develops department specific injury prevention programs. She is a Certified Ergonomic Analysis Specialist with 28 years experience in industrial medicine. She is a Maitland-Australian Certified Orthopaedic Manual Therapist. She received a BS in Health Science from the University of Kentucky.

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